

Cooperative Conservation Highlights from FY 2007 President's Budget

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Cooperative Conservation

Wetlands provide critical environmental, economic, and ecosystem health benefits to the Nation, such as reducing flood risk, improving water quality, and supplying habitat to hundreds of species. Recognizing the need for more effective use and coordination of Federal wetland management activities, the President announced in April 2004 a new national policy to



achieve an overall increase of U.S. wetlands by restoring, protecting, and enhancing three million wetland acres over five years. USDA programs have helped restore 893,863 acres of wetlands since 2001. In order to enhance USDA's support for the President's goal, the 2007 Budget provides funding for the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) to enroll 250,000 acres, a 100,000-acre increase above 2006. The Budget's increased support for WRP will allow USDA to restore a larger number of acres across a broad range of ecosystems, such as floodplain forests, prairie potholes, and coastal marshes. USDA targets WRP funding to States most in need of restoration help by prioritizing dollars for areas with the highest amount of impaired wetlands and streams.

Invasive species are a multi-agency priority. When invasive species are introduced to a new area through natural events such as hurricanes or through commerce and travel, they may disrupt established agricultural and ecological systems. Their effects may range from minimal to severe and can be impossible to manage in a cost effective manner. Government, at all levels, and the private sector have spent significant valuable resources to address their impact. Given limited resources available to the Federal Government and resulting trade-offs, funding for specific projects that address invasive species should be allocated on a priority basis that considers cooperative approaches to eradication and control programs. The Budget includes \$10 million for a pilot program to be used by the Department to award grants on a competitive basis to private groups to develop cooperative, innovative, and cost effective methods for responding to invasive species.

Cooperative Conservation: Open Rivers Initiative



The Henniker dam in New Hampshire before removal.



The Henniker dam during removal.

To help repair vital riverine ecosystems, benefit communities, and enhance populations of key species, the Budget supports an Open Rivers Initiative to remove small, obsolete dams like the one shown here in New Hampshire. This initiative would provide \$6 million for a competitive grant program in NOAA focused on community-driven small dam and river barrier removals in coastal States. These efforts are expected to provide an economic boost for communities, enhance public safety, and improve populations of key species such as striped bass and salmon. The Budget also provides \$5 million for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and \$10 million for the Natural Resources Conservation Service to complement these goals.

Cooperative Conservation

Working collaboratively with partners to enhance, enjoy, and protect our natural resources and wildlife has led to creative, innovative, and successful results. This approach is embodied in the President's August 2004 Executive Order on Facilitating Cooperative Conservation. An August 2005 White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation in St. Louis, Missouri, brought together over 1,300 citizens and decision makers to identify opportunities for building conservation partnerships and institutionalizing cooperative conservation. These conservation efforts enhance on-the-ground environmental results by leveraging resources, promoting innovation, and inspiring citizen stewardship. Continuing the spirit of the Executive Order and the Conference, the 2007 Budget includes \$323 million for cooperative conservation programs at DOI.

Among the cooperative conservation programs at DOI are the Landowner Incentive, Private Stewardship, and State and Tribal Wildlife grant programs in the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Through these programs, DOI employees work with States, Tribes, communities, and landowners to conserve sensitive habitats. Through North American Wetlands Conservation grants, DOI helps fulfill the goals of the President's wetlands initiative. These grants leverage resources from organizations and individuals to conserve wetlands and associated upland habitats needed by waterfowl and other migratory birds.

National Fish Habitat Initiative

Exemplifying cooperative conservation is the National Fish Habitat Initiative (NFHI). NFHI is a nationwide strategy that harnesses the energies, expertise, and existing partnerships of State and Federal agencies and conservation organizations to improve aquatic habitat health and promote the recovery and restoration of fisheries. The 2007 Budget includes \$3 million to implement the initiative by developing new partnerships modeled after the Migratory Bird Joint Ventures, and finalize an action plan with national goals and performance standards similar to the successful North American Waterfowl Management Plan. In addition to NFHI, the Budget is helping aquatic species restoration in many ways, including doubling the funding to remove man-made barriers that block fish movement.